

INFORMATIONAL LETTER NO.**POLICY CODE:**

TO: Superintendents of Schools

FROM: J. Duke Albanese, Commissioner

RE: Enclosed Learning Connections Learn and Serve America Request for Proposals, Due October 28, 1996

DATE: August 15, 1996

Enclosed is the Fiscal Year 1997 Learning Connections grant application. Learning Connections grants support student service-learning activities which are integrated with Maine's Learning Results. These support students' intellectual, social, career, and personal development, and provide them with opportunities to solve real community problems as part of their course work.

The funding source for Learning Connections grants to school districts is the Corporation for National Service, which provides competitive grant awards to state Departments of Education. Maine's application for school year 1996-97 has been approved. Grant awards to school districts are contingent on the receipt of the federal grant. District grants of up to \$8,000 will be made for the period from December 1, 1996 through December 30, 1997. Maine expects to receive approximately \$65,000 in funds to award in grants.

If you need assistance in completing the application, please contact the project director in the department, Ed Maroon, at 207-287-5854 (e-mail ed.maroon@state.me.us) or KIDS Consortium Managing Director Caroline Allam at 207-767-9696. The KIDS Consortium is the department's partner in administering Learning Connections.



LEARN AND SERVE AMERICA

LEARNING CONNECTIONS

GRANT APPLICATION

For School Year 1996-97

**For more information contact:
Ed Maroon at (207) 287-5854**

Maine Department of Education

Name of Grant Program

Learning Connections

Funding Source

A K-12 School-Based Learn and Serve America grant from the Corporation for National Service, an independent federal agency. The Learn and Serve America Program was authorized by the National and Community Service Trust Act of 1990 (Public Law 101-610) and reauthorized by the National and Community Service Trust Act of 1993 (Public Law 103-82). The regulations for Learn and Serve America were published in the Federal Register in March, 1994.

Purpose

Learning Connections is a partnership between the Maine Department of Education and the KIDS (Kids Involve Doing Service) Consortium, Inc. Our mission is to enhance the intellectual, personal, career, and social development of all children by integrating service-learning into the climate, curriculum, policy, and instructional fabric of schools throughout Maine. Service-learning is a method of teaching and learning that engages students in working to solve real life problems and issues in their schools and communities as part of the school's curriculum.

Priorities

Programs, projects, coordination, and capacity-building activities that are school based and community based; providing students with a program of study that integrates service-learning and any combination of Maine's Learning Results content areas; that engage students of different schools, academic abilities, races, sexes, ethnic groups, disabilities, and economic backgrounds, particularly at risk and economically disadvantaged students; that engage students in designing and owning the program or project; that are connected to the IASA (Improving America's Schools Act) self-assessment and action plan established by the school system or that of a partner school system; that honors student learning through an integrated approach to assessment and the awarding of credit for the achievement of various content area competencies based on Maine's Learning Results; and that is connected to Maine's School-To-Work program for students in grades 11 and 12.

Service Activities

Programs and projects should engage students in addressing the root causes of genuine school and community problems, needs, and issues. These may include the environment, education, historic preservation, public health and safety, human services, neighborhood revitalization, and economic and community development. Employee displacement, religious proselytization, union or political organizing, and student-compensated service are strictly prohibited.

Student Assessment

Assessment of student performance must be conducted and documented in ways which are useful to students and their families. Assessment can be done utilizing any or all forms of alternative assessment. Alternative assessment has often been referred to as authentic assessment or performance-based assessment. These terms are often used synonymously to mean variants of performance assessments that require students to generate rather than choose a response. Performance assessment by any name requires students to actively accomplish complex and significant tasks, while bringing to bear prior knowledge, recent learning, and relevant skills to solve realistic or authentic problems. Exhibitions, investigations, demonstrations, written or oral responses, journals, and portfolios are examples of the assessment alternatives thought of when using the term “alternative assessment.” With respect to Learning-Connections, students would be assessed based on performance, not in a simulated and classroom based manner, but in a real world, real time situation while working on a community problem with a community partner. The outcome of this assessment would be the granting of credit for having achieved competency in specific Learning Results performance indicators and whatever locally developed curricular outcomes are identified with that Learning Results performance indicator. This credit would be awarded based on the integrated manner in which the student demonstrated it. That is, the student would not need to go back to the classroom to prove, in a simulated and artificial manner what has already been proven through a Learning-Connections activity.

Learning results competencies achieved would be signed-off by a certified teacher in the appropriate content area. As for work-based skills and knowledge achieved, these would be signed-off by an appropriate official of the participating organization or organizations. The student, if he or she chooses, might document their achievements in a portfolio or resume which may be used at some future time as evidence of school-based and work-based skills and knowledge. This would go a long way in providing evidence of “experience” often asked for by employers seeking to hire new employees.

Eligibility

A Maine school system, vocational region or center, or private school in partnership with at least one other school and one public or private nonprofit agency or institution that has demonstrated expertise in meeting educational, public safety, human or environmental needs. Additional partners may include any public, private or for-profit business or elementary or secondary school. Applicants may submit one proposal only. Previous or current grantees are eligible to compete for new awards. Primary participants are students, ages 5-17, inclusive.

Awards

Up to \$8,000 may be requested, from a pool of \$65,000. Funds are to be expended in a one year period from December 1, 1996 to August 31, 1997.

Uses of Funds

Direct program costs only; staff and professional development, including costs for training, conferences, substitutes, release time, and travel; materials/supplies; equipment; transportation for students; independent and internal evaluations; and salaries/benefits or stipends for personnel directly involved in planning, coordination, or supervision of the program or project. Funds may be subcontracted with qualified partners for these same purposes. In addition, Learn and Serve America funds may be coordinated or consolidated with other state and federal funds, provided that the objectives set forth in this grant program are fully met. Indirect costs are not allowed.

Assistance

Ed Maroon

Learning Connections Project Director and

State Supervisor for Gender Equity and Single Parent Programs

Maine Department of Education

23 State House Station

Augusta, Me. 04333-0023

(207) 287-5854

Applicants may request model K-12 program and projects from the KIDS Consortium, the department's training and technical assistance partner at (207) 767-9696.

Deadline

One original and three copies of your application must be received or postmarked by **4:00 PM on October 28, 1996. Facsimiles will not be accepted.** Applications may be mailed or hand delivered to Ed Maroon, Maine Department of Education, 23 State House Station, Augusta, Me. 04333-0023. Successful applicants will be notified of their selection within a 30-day period.

This proposal must include:

_____ Cover page

_____ Proposal narrative, including copies of IASA self-assessment

_____ Budget page & budget narrative

_____ Portfolio

Proposal Narrative

Within a narrative, please address the components below. Limit your response to a maximum of seven double-spaced, single-sided, typewritten or word processed 8 ½ by 11 inch pages.

Supportive evidence specific to the scoring criteria may be included as attachments.

1. How will service-learning enable the applicant to implement its plan and vision for student-centered learning?

To answer this section, please summarize how your proposal is connected to your IASA self-assessment and how it will address your findings in the six areas; student-centered learning; aligned curriculum, instruction, and assessment; shared vision; climate supportive of change; professional development; and coordinated people, programs, and resources. Please attach the relevant portions of your IASA self-assessment referenced as evidence.

2. How will service-learning be used as a curriculum and instruction strategy that is connected to Maine's Learning Results, and, for students enrolled in grades 11 and 12, Maine's School-To-Work Opportunities System?

3. Describe how student assessment will be conducted and documented.

This section should completely describe the applicant's assessment strategy to meet the parameters identified under the **Student Assessment** paragraph found on page two.

4. Describe participating students, their diversity, and how student ownership will be fostered.

5. What are the goals and objectives of your initiative related to (1) students' intellectual, social, career, and personal development; (2) school change; and (3) community improvement?

6. Please describe the set of activities you will undertake, including professional development. Include a timeline.

7. Describe partnerships and participating organizations, their mission or purpose, and what contributions they bring to the program.

Additional Components

Please complete the attached budget page and attach a one page narrative describing each line of the proposed budget.

Additional Requirements for 1994-95, 1995-96 Learning Connections grantees

Please submit a portfolio documenting your 1995-96 work with your completed application. Refer to the following parameters for guidance.

Portfolio Parameters

A portfolio is defined as "a purposeful, systemic, organized collection of evidence that tells the story of efforts, progress, or achievement in a given area." Portfolios are to be developed by and for each program. These portfolios should feature evidence of program growth and progress, milestones and benchmarks, problems and unpredictable outcomes.

Selective Evidence. Potential data sources might include the following examples: classroom syllabi or lesson plans; roster of participants and community partners; interviews and anecdotes from teachers, students, administrators, and community leaders; newspaper articles; samples and products of school work; photographs of classroom or field work; documents from your leadership team such as action plans, memos, minutes, and flyers; excerpts from student journals and portfolios; agendas from professional development workshops; and statements and presentations made to school, civic, or professional groups.

Meaningful Organization. A portfolio is “not a scrapbook” but a “coherent story about the efforts and progress” to institute service-learning as an integral teaching and learning strategy that supports school restructuring and community improvement. Portfolios should include a narrative, such as your grant’s abstract, that describes your vision for service-learning and its relationship to your town, team, school, and classroom goals. Portfolios may be organized into a notebook with dividers and titles for sections. Each section might begin with a brief narrative summarizing major points, or short captions might accompany each piece of evidence. For program portfolios, the body of the portfolio should be organized to address the following essential questions.

Institutional Impact

Which staff participated? Did they participate equally?

How are staff supported in their work? Include information on professional development opportunities designed or accessed, such as conferences and workshops.

How does service-learning facilitate your school and district’s restructuring goals? How does your school and district value and facilitate the implementation of service-learning?

Student Impact

What are students learning? What curricular objectives were met through the project?

How many students successfully mastered this content? How much of the curriculum was delivered through the project?

How did students get started? To what extent did they “own” the process?

What work was accomplished through group processes? What was the role of individual students?

How did the project foster students’ personal growth? Social growth?

Timeline of major events and activities.

Community Impact

How is the project impacting the root causes of significant school and community problems? What concrete changes or products resulted?

What partnerships were created with school and community resources? Include a log of adult volunteers and contributions, with attention to how students mobilized or interacted with these people and agencies.

LEARNING CONNECTIONS GRANT APPLICATION

COVER PAGE

1. School Administrative Unit _____ County _____

2. Participating School(s) _____

Community Partners _____

3. Number of students in applicant unit _____ Number involved in project _____

4. Number of faculty in applicant unit _____ Number involved in project _____

5. Title of project or program (if applicable) _____

6. Program abstract (describe in the space below)

7. Contact Person _____

Title _____ Telephone _____

Address _____

8. Budget \$ _____ + \$ _____ = \$ _____
Grant Amount Cash or In-Kind Total Project Cost

9. "As Superintendent/Chief Administrative Officer of _____
(School administrative unit), I acknowledge that this proposal has the authorization of the _____ local
school committee or governing body to operate in this district and that proper fiscal _____ records will
be maintained for reporting purposes."

Superintendent/Chief Administrative Officer

Date

**LEARNING CONNECTIONS FY'97
GRANT PROPOSAL EVALUATION CRITERIA**

1. There is compelling evidence that service-learning will enable the district to address goals identified in IASA self-assessments.

No Evidence

Compelling

Evidence

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15

2. There is evidence that service-learning and Maine's Learning Results content areas are integrated for the achievement of student learning and the attainment of content area performance indicators.

Not Integrated

Well Integrated

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

3. Student assessment is well defined and Maine's Learning Results are used to guide the assessment process in an integrated manner across the curriculum.

Not Used

Effectively Utilized

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

4. Service-learning activities will engage students of different academic abilities, races, sexes, ethnic groups, disabilities and economic backgrounds.

No Student Diversity

Highly Diverse

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

5. Students have been (or will be) responsible for designing their own service-learning experience.

No Student Involvement

Evidence of Strong Student Ownership

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

6. The applicant's goals and objectives are likely to impact students' intellectual, social, career, and personal development.

Not Likely

Highly Likely

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

7. The applicant's goals and objectives are likely to lead to significant changes in the learning experiences of most students.

Not Likely

Highly Likely

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

8. Student service-learning activities are likely to impact the community in a meaningful way.

Not Likely

Highly Likely

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

9. The activities outlined in the proposal are likely to result in achievement of the identified goals and objectives.

Not Likely

Highly Likely

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

10. The action plan timeline is realistic.

Unrealistic

Realistic

0 1 2 3 4 5

11. The program budget is consistent with the budget guidelines and will support the identified activities.

Inconsistent

Consistent

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

12. Faculty and staff are, or will be, adequately prepared to integrate service-learning and one or more Learning Results content areas.

Not Likely

Very Likely

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

13. The applicant has demonstrated that service-learning incorporates the guiding principles of Maine's School-To-Work Opportunities System.

Not Incorporated

Highly

Incorporated

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10